
HOUSE BILL 1573

State of Washington

54th Legislature

1995 Regular Session

By Representatives L. Thomas, Mielke, Blanton, Wolfe, Rust, Horn and Dellwo

Read first time 01/31/95. Referred to Committee on Financial Institutions & Insurance.

1 AN ACT Relating to heating oil pollution liability; amending RCW
2 82.38.090; adding a new section to chapter 70.148 RCW; adding a new
3 chapter to Title 70 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the intent of the legislature to
6 establish a temporary regulatory program to assist owners and operators
7 of heating oil tanks. The legislature finds that it is in the best
8 interests of all citizens for heating oil tanks to be operated safely
9 and for tank leaks or spills to be dealt with expeditiously. The
10 legislature further finds that it is necessary to protect tank owners
11 from the financial hardship related to damaged heating oil tanks. The
12 problem is especially acute because owners and operators of heating oil
13 tanks used for space heating have been unable to obtain pollution
14 liability insurance or insurance has been unaffordable.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This chapter may be known and cited as the
16 Washington state heating oil pollution liability protection act.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Unless the context clearly requires
2 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this
3 chapter.

4 (1) "Accidental release" means a sudden or nonsudden release of
5 heating oil, occurring after the effective date of this act, from
6 operating a heating oil tank that results in bodily injury, property
7 damage, or a need for corrective action, neither expected nor intended
8 by the owner or operator.

9 (2) "Bodily injury" means bodily injury, sickness, or disease
10 sustained by a person, including death at any time, resulting from the
11 injury, sickness, or disease.

12 (3)(a) "Corrective action" means those actions reasonably required
13 to be undertaken by the insured to remove, treat, neutralize, contain,
14 or clean up an accidental release in order to comply with a statute,
15 ordinance, rule, regulation, directive, order, or similar legal
16 requirement, in effect at the time of an accidental release, of the
17 United States, the state of Washington, or a political subdivision of
18 the United States or the state of Washington. "Corrective action"
19 includes, where agreed to in writing, in advance by the insurer, action
20 to remove, treat, neutralize, contain, or clean up an accidental
21 release to avert, reduce, or eliminate the liability of the insured for
22 corrective action, bodily injury, or property damage. "Corrective
23 action" also includes actions reasonably necessary to monitor, assess,
24 and evaluate an accidental release.

25 (b) "Corrective action" does not include:

26 (i) Replacement or repair of heating oil tanks or other
27 receptacles;

28 (ii) Replacement or repair of piping, connections, and valves of
29 tanks or other receptacles; or

30 (iii) Testing for a suspected accidental release if the results of
31 the testing indicate that there has been no accidental release.

32 (4) "Defense costs" include the costs of legal representation,
33 expert fees, and related costs and expenses incurred in defending
34 against claims or actions brought by or on behalf of:

35 (a) The United States, the state of Washington, or a political
36 subdivision of the United States or state of Washington to require
37 corrective action or to recover costs of corrective action; or

38 (b) A third party for bodily injury or property damage caused by an
39 accidental release.

1 (5) "Director" means the director of the Washington state pollution
2 liability insurance agency or the director's appointed representative.

3 (6) "Heating oil" means stove oil, diesel fuel, kerosene, or any
4 other petroleum product used for space heating in oil-fired furnaces,
5 heaters, and boilers. It does not include heating for industrial
6 processing or generation of electrical energy.

7 (7) "Heating oil tank" means a tank and its connecting pipes,
8 whether above or below ground, or in a basement, with pipes connected
9 to the tank for space heating of human living or working space on the
10 premises where the tank is located. "Heating oil tank" does not
11 include a decommissioned or abandoned heating oil tank, or a tank used
12 solely for industrial process heating purposes or generation of
13 electrical energy.

14 (8) "Occurrence" means an accident, including continuous or
15 repeated exposure to conditions, that results in a release from a
16 heating oil tank.

17 (9) "Owner or operator" means a person in control of, or having
18 responsibility for, the daily operation of a heating oil tank.

19 (10) "Pollution liability insurance agency" means the Washington
20 state pollution liability insurance agency.

21 (11) "Property damage" means:

22 (a) Physical injury to, destruction of, or contamination of
23 tangible property, including the loss of use of the property resulting
24 from the injury, destruction, or contamination; or

25 (b) Loss of use of tangible property that has not been physically
26 injured, destroyed, or contaminated but has been evacuated, withdrawn
27 from use, or rendered inaccessible because of an accidental release.

28 (12) "Release" means a spill, leak, emission, escape, or leaching
29 into the environment.

30 (13) "Remedial action costs" means reasonable costs that are
31 attributable to or associated with a remedial action.

32 (14) "Tank" means a stationary device, designed to contain an
33 accumulation of heating oil, that is constructed primarily of
34 nonearthen materials such as concrete, steel, fiberglass, or plastic
35 that provides structural support.

36 (15) "Third-party liability" means the liability of a heating oil
37 tank owner to another person due to property damage or personal injury
38 that results from a leak or spill.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The director shall:

2 (1) Design a program for providing pollution liability insurance
3 for heating oil tanks that provides needed coverage and aggregate
4 limits, and protects the state of Washington from unwanted or
5 unanticipated liability for accidental release claims;

6 (2) Administer, implement, and enforce the provisions of this
7 chapter. To assist in administration of the program, the director is
8 authorized to appoint up to two employees who are exempt from the civil
9 service law, chapter 41.06 RCW, and who shall serve at the pleasure of
10 the director;

11 (3) Administer the heating oil pollution liability trust account,
12 as established under section 7 of this act;

13 (4) Employ and discharge, at his or her discretion, agents,
14 attorneys, consultants, companies, organizations, and employees as
15 deemed necessary, and to prescribe their duties and powers, and fix
16 their compensation;

17 (5) Adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW as necessary to carry out
18 the provisions of this chapter;

19 (6) Design and from time to time revise a reinsurance contract
20 providing coverage to an insurer or insurers meeting the requirements
21 of this chapter. The director is authorized to provide reinsurance
22 through the pollution liability insurance agency trust account;

23 (7) Solicit bids from insurers and select an insurer to provide
24 pollution liability insurance for third-party bodily injury and
25 property damage, and corrective action to owners and operators of
26 heating oil tanks;

27 (8) Monitor the success of the program and periodically make such
28 reports and recommendations to the legislature as the director deems
29 appropriate;

30 (9) Register, and design a means of accounting for, operating
31 heating oil tanks.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) In selecting an insurer to provide
33 pollution liability insurance coverage to owners and operators of
34 heating oil tanks used for space heating, the director shall evaluate
35 bids based upon criteria established by the director that shall
36 include:

37 (a) The insurer's ability to underwrite pollution liability
38 insurance;

1 (b) The insurer's ability to settle pollution liability claims
2 quickly and efficiently;

3 (c) The insurer's estimate of underwriting and claims adjustment
4 expenses;

5 (d) The insurer's estimate of premium rates for providing coverage;

6 (e) The insurer's ability to manage and invest premiums; and

7 (f) The insurer's ability to provide risk management guidance to
8 insureds.

9 (2) The director shall select the bidder most qualified to provide
10 insurance consistent with this chapter and need not select the bidder
11 submitting the least expensive bid. The director may consider bids by
12 groups of insurers and management companies who propose to act in
13 concert in providing coverage and who otherwise meet the requirements
14 of this chapter.

15 (3) Owners and operators of heating oil tanks, or sites containing
16 heating oil tanks where a preexisting release has been identified or
17 where the owner or operator knows of a preexisting release are eligible
18 for coverage under the program subject to the following conditions:

19 (a) The owner or operator must have a plan for proceeding with
20 corrective action; and

21 (b) If the owner or operator files a claim with the insurer, the
22 owner or operator has the burden of proving that the claim is not
23 related to a preexisting release until the owner or operator
24 demonstrates to the satisfaction of the director that corrective action
25 has been completed.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** (1) The activities and operations of the
27 program are exempt from the provisions and requirements of Title 48 RCW
28 and to the extent of their participation in the program, the activities
29 and operations of the insurer selected by the director to provide
30 liability insurance coverage to owners and operators of heating oil
31 tanks are exempt from the requirements of Title 48 RCW except for:

32 (a) Chapter 48.03 RCW pertaining to examinations;

33 (b) RCW 48.05.250 pertaining to annual reports;

34 (c) Chapter 48.12 RCW pertaining to assets and liabilities;

35 (d) Chapter 48.13 RCW pertaining to investments;

36 (e) Chapter 48.30 RCW pertaining to deceptive, false, or fraudulent
37 acts or practices; and

38 (f) Chapter 48.92 RCW pertaining to liability risk retention.

1 (2) To the extent of their participation in the program, the
2 insurer selected by the director to provide liability insurance
3 coverage to owners and operators of heating oil tanks shall not
4 participate in the Washington insurance guaranty association nor shall
5 the association be liable for coverage provided to owners and operators
6 of heating oil tanks issued in connection with the program.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** (1) The heating oil pollution liability
8 trust account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. All
9 receipts from the pollution liability insurance fee collected under
10 section 8 of this act and reinsurance premiums shall be deposited into
11 the account. Expenditures from the account may be used only for the
12 purposes set out under this chapter. Only the director or the
13 director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account. The
14 account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but
15 no appropriation is required for expenditures. Any residue in the
16 account shall be transferred at the end of the biennium to the
17 pollution liability insurance agency trust account.

18 (2) Money in the account may be used by the director for the
19 following purposes:

- 20 (a) Corrective action costs;
- 21 (b) Third-party liability claims;
- 22 (c) Costs associated with claims administration;
- 23 (d) Purchase of an insurance policy to cover all registered heating
24 oil tanks, and reinsurance of the policy; and
- 25 (e) Administrative expenses of the program, including personnel,
26 equipment, and supplies.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** (1) A pollution liability insurance fee
28 shall be imposed on all heating oil purchased within the state. The
29 fee shall be based on the rate of six one-hundredths of one cent per
30 gallon of heating oil purchased.

31 (2) The pollution liability insurance fee shall be collected by the
32 department of licensing from special fuel dealers with payment of the
33 special fuel dealer tax.

34 (3) The fee proceeds shall be used for the specific regulatory
35 purposes of this chapter.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** The following shall be confidential and
2 exempt under chapter 42.17 RCW, subject to the conditions set forth in
3 this section:

4 (1) All examination and proprietary reports and information
5 obtained by the director and the director's staff in soliciting bids
6 from insurers and in monitoring the insurer selected by the director
7 may not be made public or otherwise disclosed to any person, firm,
8 corporation, agency, association, governmental body, or other entity.

9 (2) All information obtained by the director or the director's
10 staff related to registration of heating oil tanks to be insured may
11 not be made public or otherwise disclosed to any person, firm,
12 corporation, agency, association, governmental body, or other entity.

13 (3) The director may furnish all or part of examination reports
14 prepared by the director or by any person, firm, corporation,
15 association, or other entity preparing the reports on behalf of the
16 director to:

17 (a) The Washington state insurance commissioner;

18 (b) A person or organization officially connected with the insurer
19 as officer, director, attorney, auditor, or independent attorney or
20 independent auditor; and

21 (c) The attorney general in his or her role as legal advisor to the
22 director.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** Nothing contained in this chapter shall
24 authorize any commercial conduct which is prohibited by RCW 19.86.020
25 through 19.86.060, and no section of this chapter shall be deemed to be
26 an implied repeal of any of those sections of the Revised Code of
27 Washington.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 11.** The director shall report by December 31 of
29 each year to the legislature on the status of the regulatory program
30 under this chapter.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** A new section is added to chapter 70.148
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 The director shall provide reinsurance through the pollution
34 liability insurance program trust account to the heating oil pollution
35 liability protection program under sections 1 through 11 of this act.

1 **Sec. 13.** RCW 82.38.090 and 1994 c 262 s 23 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 It shall be unlawful for any person to act as a special fuel dealer
4 or a special fuel user in this state unless such person is the holder
5 of an uncanceled special fuel dealer's or a special fuel user's license
6 issued to him or her by the department.

7 A special fuel dealer's license authorizes a person to deliver
8 previously untaxed special fuel into the fuel supply tanks of motor
9 vehicles, collect the special fuel tax on behalf of the state at the
10 time of delivery, and remit the taxes collected to the state as
11 provided herein. A licensed special fuel dealer may also deliver
12 untaxed special fuel into bulk storage facilities of a licensed special
13 fuel user or dealer without collecting the special fuel tax. Special
14 fuel dealers, when making deliveries of special fuel into bulk storage
15 to any person not holding a valid special fuel license, must collect
16 the special fuel tax at time of delivery, unless the person to whom the
17 delivery is made is specifically exempted from the tax as provided
18 herein.

19 A special fuel user's license authorizes a person to purchase
20 special fuel into bulk storage for use in motor vehicles either on or
21 off the public highways of this state without payment of the special
22 fuel tax at time of purchase. Holders of special fuel licenses are all
23 subject to the bonding, reporting, tax payment, and record-keeping
24 provisions of this chapter. All purchases of special fuel by a
25 licensed special fuel user directly into the fuel supply tank of a
26 motor vehicle are subject to the special fuel tax at time of purchase.
27 Special authorization may be given to farmers, logging companies, and
28 construction companies to purchase special fuel directly into the
29 supply tanks of nonhighway equipment or into portable slip tanks for
30 nonhighway use without payment of the special fuel tax. ((Persons
31 utilizing special fuel for heating purposes only are not required to be
32 licensed.))

33 Special fuel users operating motor vehicles in interstate commerce
34 having two axles and a gross vehicle weight or registered gross vehicle
35 weight not exceeding twenty-six thousand pounds are not required to be
36 licensed. Special fuel users operating motor vehicles in interstate
37 commerce having two axles and a gross vehicle weight or registered
38 gross vehicle weight exceeding twenty-six thousand pounds, or having
39 three or more axles regardless of weight, or a combination of vehicles,

1 when the combination exceeds twenty-six thousand pounds gross vehicle
2 weight, must comply with the licensing and reporting requirements of
3 this chapter. A copy of the license must be carried in each motor
4 vehicle entering this state from another state or province.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 14.** Sections 1 through 11 of this act shall
6 expire June 1, 2005.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 15.** Sections 1 through 11 of this act shall
8 constitute a new chapter in Title 70 RCW.

--- END ---